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PRESS RELEASE

MED Promotes Sustainable Growth and Digital Transformation in Belize

Belmopan, April 24, 2024.

The Central Executing Unit of the Ministry of Economic Development held a joint handing-over ceremony on April 23, for two specific projects.

Through the Sustainable and Inclusive Belize (SAIB) project, six extension officers were contracted to support the Ministry of Agriculture, Food Security and Enterprise in the project implementation by providing technical guidance and coordination support to the project activities at the district Level. In order to properly conduct their duties, the extension officers received six motorcycles, desks, chairs, and laptops valuing BZ\$51,661.97.

Additionally, the National Meteorological Service of Belize and the National Climate Change Office under the Ministry of Sustainable Development and Climate Change are being provided equipment and human resources valued at BZ\$89,449.95. This support aims to upscale the Climate Risks Information System to incorporate environmental information for the long-term competitiveness and sustainability of the agriculture and tourism sectors. They will also benefit from the addition of two communications officers to boost public information campaigns on climate and environmental risks and resilient and environmentally sustainable practices in agriculture and tourism.

The SAIB project aims to improve incomes and promote sustainable livelihoods within the agriculture and tourism sectors, supporting 2,820 individuals over five years. The goal is to enhance the competitiveness of Micro, Small, and Medium Enterprises, boost climate resilience, and promote environmental sustainability. The project is funded by the Government of Belize and the Inter-American Development Bank (IDB) through a loan of BZ\$30 million and a non-reimbursable investment financing agreement of BZ\$1,600,000.

Furthermore, through the Digital Innovation to Boost Economic Development in Belize Project, the Vital Statistics Unit (VSU) of the Attorney General's Ministry was provided with IT hardware at a cost of over BZ\$440,000. This hardware will be installed and configured by IT professionals to support the digital transformation of civil registry services. The VSU staff will also receive training to ensure the successful deployment and digital transformation.

The Digital Innovation to Boost Economic Development in Belize Project is a BZ\$20 million, five-year project, designed to foster the digitalization of firms

and government services to drive growth and efficiency in Belize's economy. Component one aims to promote firms' growth through increased adoption of digital solutions, enhance firms' efficiency through the digitalization of licensing processes, and reduce costs for citizens through the digitalization of civil registration services. Component two focuses on the digital transformation of government services for citizens, optimizing and digitizing processes related to citizens' registration services, including digitization of records and acquisition of IT infrastructure.

In total, over 70,000 Belizean citizens will benefit from lower transaction costs from the digitalization of the Civil Registry, more than 500 citizens will be trained in a Digital Literacy program, and over 50 government staff will receive training in Change Management.

The provision of equipment, personnel, and capacity building will enhance communication, increase worker efficiency, improve access to information, and foster a more sustainable economy.

Present at the handover ceremony were Hon. Jose Mai, Minister of Agriculture, Food Security and Enterprise; Mr. Servulo Baeza, CEO for the Ministry of Agriculture, Food Security, and Enterprise; Dr. Osmond Martinez, CEO for the Ministry of Economic Development; Ms. Rocio Medina Bolivar, IDB Group Country Manager in Belize; Dr. Gabriel Marquez, IICA Country Representative to Belize; Ms. Samantha Matute, Assistant Solicitor General, Attorney General's Ministry; Ms. Alexia Peralta, Director, E-Governance and Digitization Unit, Ministry of Public Utilities, Energy, Logistics and E-Governance; Mr. Colin Mattis, Deputy Chief Climate Change Officer, Ministry of Sustainable Development and Climate Change; Ms. Debbie Alfaro, Project Manager for Sustainable Inclusive Belize, Central Executing Unit, Ministry of Economic Development; and Mr. Henry Wade, Project Manager for Digital Innovation to Boost Economic Development in Belize Project, Central Executing Unit, Ministry of Economic Development, as well as other staff from the Ministry of Economic Development.

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For more information, contact:

Dr. Osmond Martinez

Chief Executive Officer

Ministry of Economic Development

ceo@med.gov.bz